

ST. LOUIS BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Official Organ of the Saint Louis Bird Club
for the
Enjoyment, Study and Conservation of Birds

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NO. III.

The March Meeting

The March Meeting will be held on Tuesday March 15, at the Nurse's Home of the Jewish Hospital, 306 South Kingshighway, at 8 P.M.

Our meetings were formerly held on each third Wednesday of the month but at the Annual Meeting in January it was voted to hold the meetings on each third Tuesday.

The Bird Club is able to offer another popular indoor field trip as the main attraction of this meeting. Mounted specimens of all the spring birds will be on display and the trip will be led by Mr. Wayne Short assisted by other members of the club.

This is a chance to learn something about the birds to be seen on the spring bird walks.

You are urged to come and bring your friends.

A Weaver-Bird

The House, or English Sparrow. *Passer domesticus domesticus*. A species with which everybody is seemingly familiar and yet about which we know very little. It belongs to the Order of Weaver Finches (Ploceidae) and is not a sparrow at all. It looks so much like a sparrow that it is called one yet it is a weaver-bird and belongs to the same family as the Indigo Bunting. None of them are really musical as are many of the sparrows.

The House Sparrow looks like a sparrow. If you will study its skeleton you will find many little ways in which it is like a Weaver-Bird instead of a sparrow. A study of the wing feathers of a true sparrow shows nine primary feathers while Weaver-birds have ten, though the outermost one is often small or even rudimentary.

They were first brought to this side of the Atlantic in 1850, by Nicolas Pike who liberated eight pairs at Brooklyn to help take care of the cancre-worms. By 1900 they had spread to every part of the United States, and now outnumber any other bird.

This exact variety of English Sparrow is found all over Europe and Asia, but when you get down into southern Europe and India, or Africa, you will find them smaller and paler, depending on the nature of the country in which they live; hence, a number of species, as well as varieties, are recognized.

They are not migratory birds, like so many in this country, and do not travel more than a few hundred miles which has been to their advantage. Migratory birds have not been able to establish themselves in a new land. People have tried to introduce Skylarks, Nightingales, European Goldfinches, and other migratory species into this country, but they have always failed because of the dangers encountered in migrating, and the little chance of finding one another in this big country when the next breeding-season comes after a winter of separation in the South. So it was a great advantage to the English Sparrow not to be migratory.

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(A Weaver-bird)

The old birds always stay in the same place, but the young do not often settle down in the immediate neighborhood. When the young are able to feed themselves they assemble in flocks and roam around hunting for good feeding places. Some may travel for several hundred miles before the next spring finds them ready to nest for themselves. And they are likely to travel in any direction, providing there is plenty of food. It was primarily in this way that they settled the whole country in fifty years, although some people shipped some from place to place and liberated them. All are not descended from the original eight pairs that were liberated at Brooklyn in 1850; for during the next twenty-five years there were fifty or more importations by other people, interested in their welfare, who thought that they might help to control their insect pests.

Most of their food consists of grain or table-refuse, so you could not expect to find them far into the north woods nor the southern swamps. Railroads with their leaky freight-cars of grain, were a great blessing to them, as were also the stables and chicken-yards.

In this day of motor transportation, they would not spread nearly as fast as in the old days when they pioneered across the country, finding plenty of food on the roads everywhere. There are not so many in the cities today as there were twenty-five years ago. The coming of the automobile has ruined their chief food supply for no one keeps horses any more, and no longer is there spilled grain to be found around stables or in the streets. Their places in the city are taken by the starlings, who do not have to get down on the streets to feed, for they can fly long distances in half the time, and so they have usurped all the holes where the sparrows formerly nested.

The starling is much more aggressive and it seems as if they will supplant the house sparrow.

The male house sparrow is a handsome bird with a black throat, chestnut shoulders and head stripes and white wing-bars. The females and youngsters do not have these markings. During the winter months the black throat and chestnut markings are largely obscured by grey edgings to the feathers, and they look more like the females. They do not moult in the spring but the edges all wear off and about the middle of April the black and chestnut become quite conspicuous. Thus they remain all summer until August, when they moult all their feathers which are very much worn and frayed by that time, and secure a brand new coat.

The house sparrows are more sociable than most birds and do not mind nesting fairly close to one another. In spite of being Weaver-birds and therefore members of a family that includes the best nest-builders of all birds, they dislike to weave open nests in trees, although at times they build large bulky, spherical nests in trees.

Both the males and females build the nests, sit on the eggs, and help care for the young.

The young band themselves together in large flocks about good feeding-places. Often they move from the city out into the grain-fields of the country or they flock about chicken-yards. Much of their unpopularity comes from these large bands of youngsters that invade gardens and grain-fields or roost in considerable numbers in the barns or the eaves on the houses. They are also disliked for the fact that they use the bird houses in the spring which we put up for the Blue birds or Wrens. They eat quite a few insects during the spring and summer--especially when they are feeding their young. They are quite

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Price \$1.00 a year in advance. Free to
paid-up members of the Club. Subscrip-
tion begins with the January number:

Club Officers

President.....Mr. Doland A. Dede
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Treasurer.....Mr. Thos. D. Miller
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Director.....Mr. Sterling P. Jones
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(A Weaver Bird)

omnivorous, and during outbreaks of grasshoppers or cutworms or canker-
worms, when they are easy to find, they feed almost exclusively on them
until they get scarce again. They are not so important in controlling
insects but at least all of their habits are not bad. And since their
food supply is being cut off, they are beginning to get more scarce.

Activities of Some of Our Younger Members

On Sunday morning, January 23rd, 1938, we three boys, Martin Schweig,
Ted Meiner and I, led by Eugene Seele, went on an interesting bird walk
in Forest Park. Armed with field glasses and grain, supplied by Seele,
we followed a route through the lagoon section east of the Zoo, spreading
wheat and ground corn.

In the gardens of the Pavillion, especially, we noticed many birds.

We continued our trip in the woods, West of the Zoo. After we had
spread the rest of the grain in these woods, we returned to our starting
point and followed the same route over which we had spread food,

The most numerous birds in this section were Jays. We also noted
flocks of starlings in the vicinity of the Pavillion.

Another interesting walk was held on Sunday February 13, at 8 A.M.
The members were Eugene Selle, Martin Schweig and Bill Kersten. The
weather was generally fair and quite a few early spring birds were
noticed. Starting at the Northwest corner of the Park, we walked to
the woods west of the Zoo, spreading grain along the way and observing
the birds. Then we turned east and walked through the lagoon section
of the Park. The grain used was supplied by Eugene Seele. It is
evident that several species of early spring birds have entered the
Park ahead of time.

The most important observation was a male and female Meadowlark
in meadows south of Lindell Boulevard in the Northwest part of the
Park.

Bill Kersten

The above boys have been feeding the birds quite regularly in
Forest Park and have established a trail through the Park.

This is good work on the part of these boys. Let's hear of some
of the activities of other members of our club.

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Our club is engaged at the present time on two worth-while studies of bird life in and around St. Louis. These two projects are: 1. A census of the nesting and migratory birds to be found in Forest Park, and 2. A thorough check on the present status of the European Tree Sparrow.

Our knowledge of the bird life in Forest Park promises to be considerably enhanced by our annual spring bird hikes to be made each Saturday and Sunday morning during the month of April. All our Bird Club members are urged to be present personally at as many of these hikes as they possibly can attend, and also to spread the word around and invite as many of their friends and acquaintances as they care to. A complete list of all bird walks planned for this spring will be found in another part of this bulletin.

It hardly need restatement that the principle purpose of these hikes in Forest Park is educational. The capable leaders who are giving their services are anxious to do all in their power to help spread the knowledge and love of birds. To that end simplicity will be the keynote of all hikes. No one should stay away because he thinks he doesn't know enough about birds. All that is necessary is the interest and willingness to get up early enough to be on time for the hikes.

The second project engaging our attention at the present time is the census of the European Tree Sparrow. Much material has been gathered in the past. Much remains to be collected. We want to know its exact status at the present time. Anyone having information of any kind as to the location of any flocks of these sparrows is requested to communicate with the editor of this bulletin, Mr. Louis M. Weber, or with the secretary of our Bird Club, Miss Anne Loftus.

The purpose of this European Tree Sparrow project is to determine whether the species is increasing or decreasing in number, whether it is spreading its range or staying well within the St. Louis area, whether it is experiencing any difficulties in competing with the English Sparrow for nesting sites and food or not, and whether or not it has shown or is showing itself to be a useful bird and a desirable addition to our bird population.

In conclusion we wish to call particular attention to our meeting this month. It promises to be a very special attraction. The time and place of the meeting are announced on another page of this bulletin.

Spring Bird Walks

As usual Spring Bird Walks will be conducted in the city parks on each Saturday and Sunday morning during the month of April.

Walks are planned for Forest Park, Shaws Garden and Bellefontaine Cemetery.

The Forest Park walks will leave the Jefferson Memorial at 8:30 a.m.

The Shaws Garden Bird Walks leave the main entrance at 7:30 a.m.

The Bellefontaine walks leave the Hawthorne entrance at 7:30 a.m.

The Forest Park Walks are scheduled for each Saturday and Sunday mornings. The Shaws Garden walks are scheduled for each Saturday and three walks are to be held at Bellefontaine on the 16th, 23rd, and 20th.

The leaders will remain with the groups which they lead for an hour and a half and then will be free to leave.

The leaders of the walks are Miss L. R. Ernst, Miss Anne Loftus, Mr. Luther Ely Smith, Mr. Roland A. Dede, Mr. Starling P. Jones, and Mr. Louis M. Weber.

Other leaders are needed for walks. If you care to lead a walk or to assist on one of them please let us know the place and the time you care to be of assistance.

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The February Meeting.

Fifteen members of the club ventured out into the rain in order to attend the monthly meeting of the club. Any one who was present will tell you that he was well repaid.

Fifty mounted specimens of the winter residents of the St. Louis region were on display. The birds ranged from the little Ruby Crowned Kinglet to the Red Tailed Hawk.

President Roland A. Dede did an excellent job of leading this indoor field meeting.

Wildlife Week

The Third Annual North American Wildlife Conference which met in Baltimore Maryland, February 14 to 17th, set aside the week of March 20th as National Wildlife Restoration Week.

Conservation Director

Last week, the Missouri Supreme Court affirmed the right of the Conservation Commission of Missouri to name Mr. Irwin T. Bode as Director of Conservation.

His appointment had been challenged by politicians on the grounds that he had not lived in Missouri for one year prior to his appointment.

As Old As The Pelicans

We must accord to Pelicans that respectful attention which is the due of extreme age.

Pelicans became pelicans long before man became man. A study of the distribution of the eleven existing species leads to the conclusion that at least as late as the later part of the Tertiary Period. Our White Pelicans, and doubtless also other species, presented much the same appearance as they do today.

Passer Montonus

The European Tree Sparrow, the bird which our club is now making a census of, will be the main attraction of the April Bulletin. We hope to be able to give you its complete history.

Dues

Those who have not yet sent in their dues are now delinquent and cannot be kept on the mailing list of the club after this month, according to our constitution. Please bring your membership up to date in order to remain in good standing.

Housing

Now is the time to plan your bird housing. Repair your bird houses and clean them now. Get an early start with your housing problems just as you did with your winter feeding.

Finding nesting places is quite a problem for the birds these days. Den trees, shrubbery and thickets where birds nest have been destroyed leaving them with quite a housing problem.

Ducks in 1938.

It is the opinion of the Biological Survey that migratory waterfowl can be restored to a numerical status that will each year assure reasonable sport to the wildfowlers of the United States, Canada, and Mexico. This, however, will not warrant a return of the highly artificial methods of shooting that were formerly so conducive of excessive killing.

Duck hunting today is a "sport" and not a necessity. "Limit" bags should cease to be the acme of the sportsman's ambition.

History

A complete history of the St. Louis Bird Club is desired. Any one who knows the origin and history of the Club is asked to send in this information.

Bird Banding

During the fiscal year 1937 banding work shows that there has been no diminution of interest. Most of the older stations have continued active and several new ones have shown by their first year's work that they are valuable additions. Many new waterfowl banding stations were established during the past year, the majority on Federal refuges.

It is expected that banding stations will be located on all the refuges where Bureau personnel are resident. It is also hoped that before long banding operations will be begun in Mexico, and possibly in other Latin-American countries.

During the year 1937, the list of bird-banding cooperators numbered 2,129.

Banded birds reported - 1936 - 274,695... - 1937 - 300,894.

Returns received - - - -1936 - 18,268... - 1937 - 17,011.

Grand total of birds banded since 1920 - 2,482,044

Grand total of returns since 1920 - - - - 152,964

Nine new species have been added to the list of banded birds during the year--the Paraquet Auklet, the Parasitic Jaeger, the Bridled Tern, the White Bellied Booby, the Great White Heron, the Hudsonian Curlew, Worthen's Sparrow, Swainson's Warbler, and the Hermit Warbler.
